



Sermon: April 25, 2021

Scripture Reading: 2 Esdras 6.44-59

The Message:
Let it Be!

[Video Version](#)



**The Rev. Dr.
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I and many of my colleagues have been told in many ways that there's a fine line between a long, drawn-out sermon and a hostage situation. I'll do my best to remember the distinction!

Early in my ministry, as I was telling the children's story, a couple of the kids were being a quite obstreperous, which threw me a bit. Afterwards, I had to climb up to the pulpit, which was in the centre of the church, and I proceeded to trip over my robe on the steps. Falling into the pulpit isn't a particularly effective way of leading worship, but those are my excuses for launching into a prayer with, "Let us play," instead of "Let us pray."

Two of those obstreperous boys went on to become United Church ministers. I always thought it was that Sunday, when they realized, 'if she can do it, anybody can!'

Playfulness breaks us open, and allows wonder to enter in.

In Job, we meet Behemoth and Leviathan, two strange creatures like a mythically huge hippopotamus and crocodile, with whom, it is said, God played in the cool of the evening. Literally, ours is a playful God!

Leviathan and Behemoth appear again in 2nd Esdras, in a retelling of the Creation Story in an apocryphal book we don't often hear in church.

'Then you kept in existence two living creatures; one you called Behemoth and the other was Leviathan.' 2 Esdras 6.49

In one translation, instead of two living creatures, the translation is two living souls giving me pause to think how God's humour can remind us that we are related to all of creation!

According to this telling, God keeps these monstrous creatures around for humans potentially to eat. Whether God keeps them around for us to either eat or to wonder at, it is clear that the playfulness of God is an essential part of creation along with "inimitable flowers:" flowers of such beauty that they are impossible to copy. And "odours of inexpressible fragrance:" smells which elicit wonders too strong to be described in words.

I think perhaps it is this playfulness of God that has kept me buoyant in ministry for 46 years and has led members to share humour with me and to occasionally tease me. The first cartoon handed me was at Timothy Eaton Memorial Church, after my first sermon. It was a drawing of a woman minister, preaching from a pulpit. The caption was, "Nag, nag, nag." Fortunately, I knew the man who gave it to me was already an early convert to receiving ministry from a woman, so I didn't deck him. Instead that cartoon inspired me to raise nagging to an art and to search out folk in my churches who could be counted on to remind me to take care of what needed to be cared for. I am blessed by a few such folk at Christ First.

I had a member whose last name was Fawcett, who collected pictures of outhouses -- even toured to lecture about the outhouses of Ontario -- and in addition collected jokes that

should only be told in outhouses -- when no one else was there. He had a joke for me every week after worship. When he was dying, I brought a book to the hospital for him to read. It was entitled 1001 Clean Church Jokes. I told him I needed him to find me some clean jokes I could tell at his funeral, so he spent his last three days chuckling his way through the book, marking his three favourites, which I dutifully told.

And as Dave Gittings will tell you, my retirement party included a roast!

I can't remember the occasion. It might have been an April Fool's Sunday, but once I was preaching from the top of the centre steps of the Chancel, when, unbeknownst to me, four of the men left their choir seats and gathered behind me to sing the following as a quartet. This became my theme song. Whenever I walked into the choir practice on Sunday mornings, the music director would stop what he was playing and launch into this. My thanks to Greg, for recreating this memory!

Let it Be

When I find myself in times of trouble, Mother Morar comes to me

Preaching words of wisdom, let it be

And in my hour of darkness she is standing right in front of me

Preaching words of wisdom, let it be

Let it be, let it be, let it be, let it be

Preaching words of wisdom, let it be.